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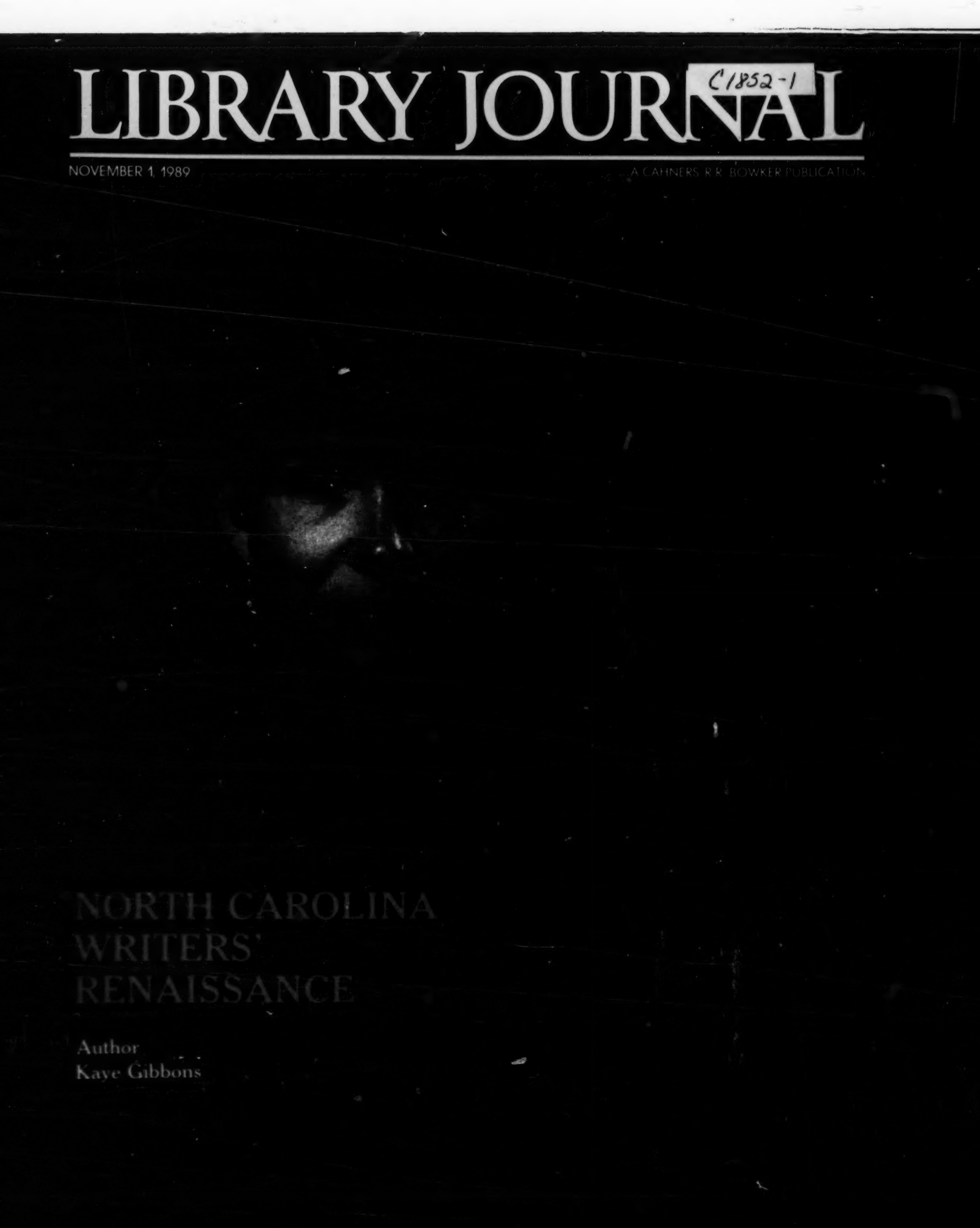
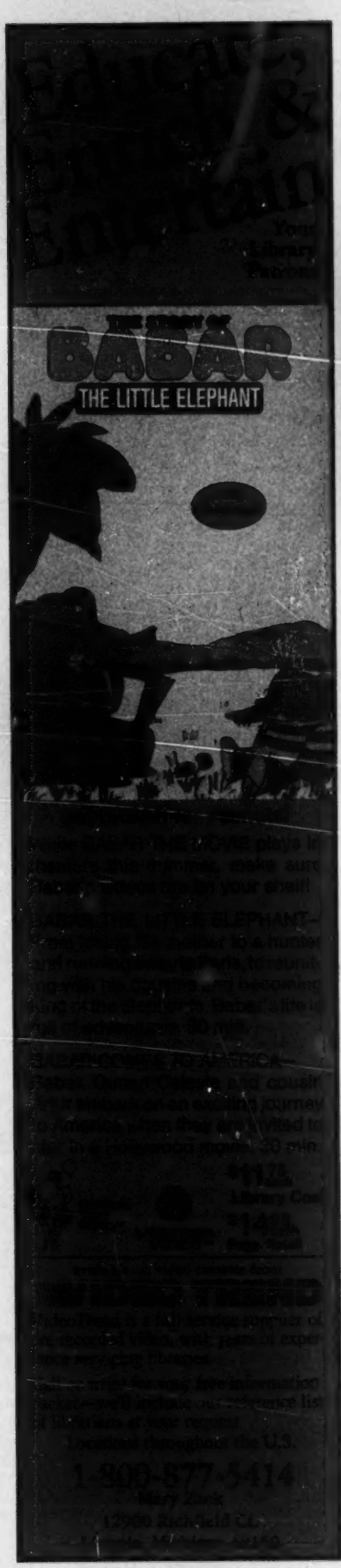


NORTH CAROLINA WRITERS' RENAISSANCE

Author
Kaye Gibbons

VOL. 114 No. 18

LIBRARY



Author Kaye Gibbons is a shining example of the North Carolina writers' renaissance. Gibbons, the first writer in residence at the North Carolina State University Library, is profiled with many other NC writers in our feature on p. 44. Photograph by Warren Uzzle

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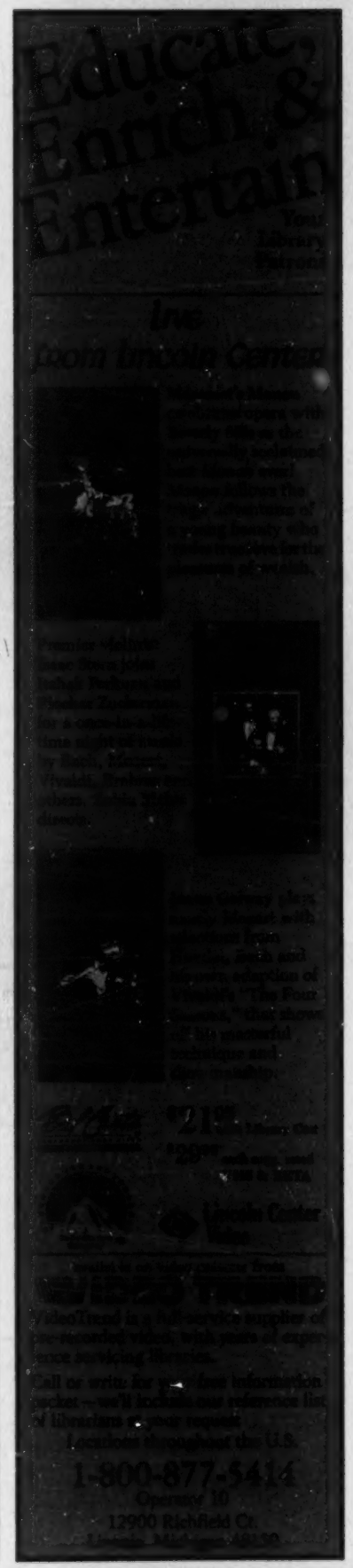

LIBRARY MARKET OUTLOOK

BY DEBORAH SELSKY

Regional Economic Activity Dictates State Government Spending

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT trend in regional economics in the 1980s has been the shifting patterns of economic activity. After decades of movement to the Sunbelt (being broadly defined as the South and West regions) from the Frostbelt (the Northeast and Midwest), there took place a sudden resurgence of activity in the Frostbelt, with sluggish growth in the Sunbelt.

In part, this reversal of growth patterns was illusionary. Population growth, employment growth, and construction activity in the Sunbelt continued to outpace the Frostbelt over this period.

Regardless, we are returning to a period of stronger growth in the Sunbelt and more moderate growth in the Frostbelt—a pattern typical of the previous four decades. So while the 1980s allowed a brief period in the limelight for the Frostbelt, regional growth trends should revert to the earlier Sunbelt patterns in the 1990s.

Employment growth export-driven

The driving force behind economic growth in the United States over the past several years has been trade. With the lower-valued dollar that we have seen since 1985, U.S. exports are less expensive to foreign consumers, and, conversely, foreign exports are less expensive to U.S. consumers.

This is the principal reason why U.S. exports of goods and services increased 13.1 percent in 1987 in inflation-adjusted dollars, and an additional 18 percent in 1988.

Consequently, regional economies that have a relatively high proportion of their employment base composed of goods and services that are exported generally have fared better over the past two years.

While other factors certainly contribute to economic performance, for some regions—the industrial Midwest (the East North Central region) and the Pacific region in particular—a strong export base seems to be an important contributor to recent employment growth.

Deborah Selsky is an economist with Cahners Economics, which provides industry analyses and forecasting services for the markets its magazines serve

Income growth strongest: Northeast

Modest employment gains, coupled with very slow population growth, have helped incomes rise faster in the Northeast than anywhere else in the country so far this decade. Of the ten states with the highest per capita incomes in 1988, five—including the top three—are in the Northeast.

The Northeast continues to lead the nation in terms of income growth, but the pace of this growth is slowing somewhat.

In 1988, only two regions—the Southwest and the Mountain states—experienced income growth significantly in excess of growth during the 1982–1988 period.

These two regions have the lowest per capita income in the nation, and their gains point to a shrinking of the gap in regional per capita incomes in the years ahead.

State government spending patterns

In general, these regional income growth patterns are reflected in the level of state government spending. Indeed, income growth has a significant impact on the size of state government revenues and, thus, on the amount of spending. On a per capita basis, state revenues, and thus expenditures, have been highest in the Northeast and lowest in the Southwest.

Similarly, per capita expenditures on public libraries are higher in the Northeast and lower in the Southwest. The Mid-Atlantic states spent an average $3.74 per capita on libraries, compared to only $1.09 per capita in the West South Central states.

In addition to spending the most, the Northeast states have also increased per capita spending more than any other region. Once again, this is a reflection of the rapid growth in revenue coupled with only moderate growth in population.

Per Capita Library Expenditures

Region	1987	Annual Growth 1984–87
New England	$3.64	19.4%
Mid-Atlantic	3.74	15.8
EN Central	2.40	15.4
WN Central	1.40	9.0
S Atlantic	2.52	8.6
ES Central	2.04	6.7
WS Central	1.09	4.7
Mountain	1.83	7.8
Pacific	2.33	10.2

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

Growth melting in the Frostbelt

The shift in regional growth patterns from the Frostbelt to the Sunbelt will soon become apparent in government spending levels.

Expect the strongest gains in government expenditures to come from the Pacific and the South Atlantic states over the next few years. Libraries in these regions can expect to reap at least some of the benefit from these greater expenditures.